

To whom it may concern,

My name is Jeffrey Parracino. I am 26 years old and currently reside in Bristol, CT. I am a life-long resident of Bristol, where I graduated from Bristol Central High School. Since high school, I have served in the CT Army National Guard as an Infantryman, and also now serve my community as a member of the Bristol Police Department's patrol division.

I have been a Police Officer for over five years. I have sustained no disciplinary action since my time as an officer, however, have received numerous awards which range from simple compliments from the people I serve, all the way to the Department Silver Star for my part in apprehending numerous individuals who stole approximately \$50,000 in property from a resident in our city.

The reason I am creating this letter is because I, as well as many of my fellow brother and sister officers, share many concerns regarding the up and coming Police Accountability Bill LCO 3471.

Before I share my concerns, I would like you to understand that I am a strong supporter of police accountability. I believe that officers who undermine the purpose of our profession, strengthen the divide the police currently have with the public, as well as hurt future police interactions with the public across the country. This includes making future interactions more dangerous, as more and more people begin to actively fight against the actions of good officers simply trying to enforce the laws in their communities. I have seen this personally since the murder of George Floyd, where the deplorable actions of an officer across the country has made it harder for me to gain the rapport and trust I need to serve the people in the city in which I am employed.

With that said, my concerns regarding the up and coming Police Accountability bill are as follows:

1. Section 29 of the bill changes the standard for the lawful and justified use of Deadly Force. The use of deadly force has, for a long time, always been judged based on the standard set forth by the Supreme Court of the United States in *Graham v. Connor*. As you are already aware, *Graham v. Connor* states that the reasonableness of a particular use of force must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on scene, rather than with the benefit of 20/20 hindsight. This bill has been our standard for use of force for decades, and for good reason. It allows officers, like myself, to use force based on what we know at the time of the incident and takes into account the necessity for us to make split second decisions in a tense and rapidly evolving situation.

Section 29 would change this standard and judge an officer's use of force based on whether their actions are objectively reasonable under the circumstances. It also states that before using deadly force, an officer should exhaust all feasible alternatives and ensure there is no substantial risk of injury to a third party AND is necessary to effect an arrest of a person whom the officer reasonably believes has committed or attempted to commit a felony which involved the actual infliction of serious physical injury.

The problem with this standard, is that it removes an officer's ability to make those split-second decisions in a situation where things rapidly evolve. It also places officers in an impossible position. If

somebody has a firearm, am I to be expected to attempt to go "hands on" with them, OC spray them, strike them with my baton, deploy my taser, use a bean-bag gun, all before I can resort to drawing my firearm? To do so would place me in extreme peril, cause it to be necessary to place myself in extremely close proximity to the person with the firearm, and try numerous less-lethal weapons and options before I resort to force that would be capable of actually saving my life. Furthermore, what if that firearm turns out to be a BB-gun with no orange tip? Should my use of force no longer be reasonable, because after the incident we learned the individual did not in actuality pose a danger of serious physical injury or death to those around him? This section of the bill would require officers to be something other than human. It would require us to know more than is possible at the time of the incident, and judge us not according to what an officer with similar training and experience would do, but rather what the average person would do with knowledge they know AFTER the incident occurred. The impossible position this creates is that an officer who moves directly to lethal force to defend himself is now unjustified in that force, because he did not attempt everything else first, when in actuality, there was not enough time to try everything else without being placed in a position of extreme peril. We are expected to become seriously injured, or die, before we can reasonably defend ourselves. And then, if we do successfully defend ourselves, we need to hope and pray that we were actually in true danger, because if not, we are still found unjustified and are now going to be prosecuted for Murder, Assault in the First Degree, as well as other charges deemed applicable to our incident.

2. Section 3 of the bill provides POST with the ability to decertify a police officer if "found that an officer's conduct tends to undermine the public confidence in police work". It then provides a list that effectively states, "including, but not limited to," with regard to an officer's actions, including things an officer can do that would cause them to be decertified while OFF DUTY.

While I believe that an officer that commits a wrongdoing should absolutely be held accountable, this standard is extremely unreasonable. Across the country, the "court of public opinion" has persecuted those who disagree with their political stance. The "Thin Blue Line" that was meant as a symbol to represent the police who stand between chaos and those they protect, is now one that to some represent racism. Should I, an officer with no disciplinary action against me, that has served with honor and integrity, lose my certification and job because my beliefs maybe don't match with those in POST, even if those beliefs are not harmful to those around me?

Should I not be allowed to go out and drink at a bar with friends, then post that on social media, even if no crime or otherwise offensive thing occurs, because that "undermines the public confidence in police work"? The standard for an officer to be decertified, and thus lose the very job that they support their family on, is such a low bar and is so broad, that an officer is going to be expected to do nothing more than stay home and keep their head down, because the other option is be singled out for living their life and possibly lose their job. We do not expect these standards from the public that we serve, and should not have these expectations from the police, who are nothing more than a direct reflection of the public we serve. This standard needs to be rethought and made stricter, so that good officers do not lose their income over the opinions of another person.

3. Section 41 would completely repeal qualified immunity in its entirety. Qualified immunity protects

me, and officers like me, from lawsuits that are the direct result of the requirements of our job. If I arrest somebody for DUI, qualified immunity protects me from needing to pay for representation and court costs should that person want to sue me for doing so. The very thing the public expects me to do, now becomes the very thing that could cost me so much money in a civil court setting.

Qualified immunity DOES NOT protect me if I commit a wrongdoing, or use unreasonable force. If I fall outside the standards of *Graham v. Connor*, then I am not protected. If I commit a crime or violate someone's rights, I am not protected. An officer who truly does wrong, is not protected.

What repealing qualified immunity will do, is make it to where good officers will not be proactive. If we see a car swerving on the road, instead of going out of our way to stop that vehicle and ensure the operator is not intoxicated, we will weigh whether or not the impending civil court litigation is worth stopping that vehicle. We will stop going out of our way to STOP crime, but rather, respond to calls for service when crime is already committed. The people we serve will suffer as a direct result of this bill.

It is an understanding in my profession, that any interaction could possibly turn violent. A simple car stop for running a red light could turn into an individual in possession of an illegal firearm. One of my fellow officers, not long ago, stopped a car after it struck a telephone pole, fled the scene and was observed driving erratically. This individual was apparently intoxicated, and stopped by my coworker. During the course of an otherwise routine investigatory stop, this individual quickly attacked my coworker, placing him in a headlock and attempting to choke him into unconsciousness. Thankfully, we were able to apprehend him without any injury to he or my coworker, and later found a loaded firearm in the very vehicle this individual was in. If qualified immunity is repealed, could you blame an officer for placing the needs of his family above making an arrest?

4. Section 12 would create a task force to research whether or not police should be required to purchase their own liability insurance and remove road construction jobs from police. I disagree with this because, as the public has been doing, you cannot compare a police officer to a medical professional. Thousands of people die to medical malpractice every year. Those medical professionals carry liability insurance, which covers them in these situations, but they are not found guilty of criminal wrongdoing. They also make leaps and bounds more money as a direct result of their profession, whereas the police do not. With no qualified immunity in place, officers can be sued for everything. Furthermore, our insurance rates would skyrocket, as our job is naturally riddled with liability. On top of that, after spending an incredible amount of money on this insurance to protect me, I could still be found of wrongdoing in a criminal setting. To my knowledge, doctors do not get arrested for manslaughter or murder, if a patient dies because of the wrong medical decision the doctor makes.

Furthermore, taking road construction away from police takes away a source of income from the very officers that lawmakers want to be responsible for their own liability insurance. Road construction is a direct public safety issue, which should be considered by the municipalities they fall within. It makes complete sense to have officers in these positions, as they are trained and granted the authority by this very state to direct and control the flow of traffic. It also places officers in various areas throughout their jurisdiction, where an officer is clearly visible and can act if a crime of violence occurs near them. To

remove these officers, is to take away our income, and make the public less safe as a result.

5. Section 16 would require an officer to have mental health evaluations every five years. My question regarding this, is what happens when an officer is found to have post-traumatic stress, or other forms of mental illness directly resulting from the profession we are asked to commit our lives to? Can we lose our jobs for this? Furthermore, this does not take into account the recent progress we have made as a society with allowing police to seek mental help on their own, without fear of losing their jobs. This section is redundant, confusing, and makes me fear that I could lose my job and benefits because I am going through mental strife caused by my job. As an officer who serves in a department that recently lost a beloved Lieutenant to suicide, this feels almost like an insult, instead of progress.

6. Section 17 creates civilian review boards that are permitted to issue subpoenas and compel testimony as part of an investigation. Civilians are not trained and educated in laws pertaining to use of force or authority police have during investigations, they are not privy to the information law enforcement have access to, and they typically do not understand simple things regarding why police are trained a certain way. To grant these same civilians, with no training or understanding of our profession, the authority to investigate us and pass judgement, does not make sense. Furthermore, civilians should not be granted legal authority. There are legal certifications and standards in place that police, lawyers, judges, and others must meet before they are granted legal authority. These standards are set in place for a reason.

I hope you will take the time to read my testimony regarding this bill. Please take into account my reasoning behind why I believe this bill is flawed. I ask you to not place me in a position where serving my community, with the professionalism it deserves, can result in me losing my job, my income, and the very means to support my wife, and the daughter that is coming into our lives in November. You ask so very much of me and my fellow brother and sister officers and we do as you ask to the best of our abilities. Please do not take away the protections you as lawmakers have put in place to protect us for doing exactly that of which you ask.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Officer Jeffrey Parracino #252

Bristol Police Department, Patrol Division